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JUNE 15, 2022 | VOLUME 13 | ISSUE 12

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NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

THE PRIDE ISSUE:
*celebrating LGBTQ+ artists,
organizers and advocates*

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GROUNDCOVER NEWS

CREATING **OPPORTUNITY** AND A **VOICE** FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE WHILE TAKING ACTION TO END HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed. Vendors purchase each biweekly copy of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for \$2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. We are proudly a member of the International Network of Street Papers.

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PRONOUN 101

What is a personal pronoun?
A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (such as I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (such as she, them, and this). Personal pronouns (such as he, hers, ze) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

What are examples of pronouns?
She/Her/Hers, He/Him/His, They/Them/Theirs, Ze/Hir/Hirs

How do I pronounce these?
Ze: zee
Hir: here
Hirs: heres

Why is it important to respect designated personal pronouns?
You can't always know what someone's personal pronoun is by looking at them. Correctly using someone's designated personal pronoun is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity. When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, dismissed or alienated (or often, all of the above).

Q. What if I make a mistake?
It's okay! Mistakes happen. If you use the wrong pronoun, acknowledge the mistake, correct it and then move on. If you forget someone's personal pronouns, follow the same protocol: acknowledge the mistake, correct it and move on.

Q. What does cisgender or cis mean?
Cis describes a person whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth.

Thank you to the Univerity of Michigan Spectrum Center for this Pronoun FAQ

Helpful, beautiful bus benches and bus shelters

I think benches and bus shelters are very helpful and very important to people. The reason why is because people young and old have health problems that make it hard for them to walk and stand.

I believe every business should have benches to sit on inside and outside of the business. I think also in every rural area there should be plenty of benches and bus shelters — and buses *running*.

Benches and bus shelters can



DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 485

be a form of artwork to look at and to sit on. Some park benches

are pretty. I think of benches as fancy seats to sit on with flowers and trees for shade.

I like bus shelters that are made of glass so I can see when the bus is coming. Bus shelters keep you from getting wet in the rain and can give you shade. They can also keep you warm and protect you from the wind.

I think benches and bus shelters are very important to people and I think there should be more.

The oval window



CHRISTOPHER ELLIS
Groundcover vendor No. 485

Sacred moments really don't dissipate, to dissolve leaving, going away, as if making room for others in our shared space.

Or, as scattering solid time to be miniature movements made like erasable sketches on un-cosmic paper, forming individual realities, or

As moving histories unlinked ... alone, concrete, stone hard against, or unaware of our oval window to, uncircular as if a recurring monotonous cycle ...

But is squinted, a living eye, a cat's eye, seeing, seeing our psychic oneness, and the breeze felt, or that was, forming the air of...

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Voices from the street: Storytelling among those experiencing homelessness

RUTH BISHOP AND SARAH JABOUR
Groundcover contributors

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we medical students whose clinical rotations had paused served as volunteers at the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County's rotating shelter at various community churches in Ann Arbor. Over time, we established trust and built positive relationships with both the staff and community members experiencing homelessness. We were fortunate enough to informally lead writing exercises and to be on the receiving end of powerful narratives shared with us by members of our community experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 quarantine. It is out of these experiences that the ideas for this storytelling project were formed.

This project centers on the belief that people experiencing homelessness are our best teachers and should be included in work addressing the health disparities and root causes of housing insecurity including unaffordable housing, racial inequity, non-livable wages and lack of access to substance use disorder treatment and mental health services.

We conducted narrative storytelling workshops among people experiencing homelessness in southeast Michigan with multiple synergistic aims: to improve mental health and access to mental healthcare services; build community and trust; and provide an advocacy outlet by elevating these experiences in the form of digital and printed published stories written by community members experiencing homelessness.

Research shows that storytelling may reduce symptoms of depression and build feelings of resilience, self-esteem and community connectedness. Engagement in artistic activities such as writing can enhance mood, develop a capacity for self-reflection, heal emotional injuries, build confidence and increase understanding of oneself and

others. Importantly, there is a disproportionate number of people experiencing homelessness with mental health and substance use disorders who are not in treatment. According to the most recent data, it is estimated that in Michigan over 40% of people experiencing homelessness have both a mental health and physical health diagnosis. It is also well documented that people experiencing homelessness experience a perceived sense of unwelcomeness and discrimination by the healthcare system; which is worrisome, as it may contribute to one of the many barriers people experiencing homelessness face when attempting to access needed healthcare.

Over the course of our project, we conducted five in-person writing workshops at the Delonis Center with 28 total participants. Seven participants indicated an interest in sharing their stories in a publication, so we worked longitudinally with them, audio recording their oral histories and then documenting them. The final versions were all approved by the storytellers prior to publication and were minimally edited to stay true to the storytellers' own words as much as possible.

We also connected nine people with social services to improve their socio-emotional wellbeing (cell phone assistance, transportation to medical appointments, etc.). We are collaborating with Groundcover News and *Auxocardia* (online humanities medical journal at the University of Michigan) with the goal of sharing these stories with our academic and local communities to advocate and elevate the voices of people experiencing homelessness.

This work has also deeply impacted us, both personally and professionally. Our storytellers were each incredibly unique in their identities and life experiences. We heard stories carrying the weight of childhoods full of trauma and abuse, stories of addiction, medical illness, mental health crises, the hurts of past relationships and the uncertainties of being an immigrant in a new

country. These were also stories filled with deep, meaningful human connections, stories permeated with resilience, triumph, love, altruism and hope for the future. Besides a shared experience of homelessness, the most prominent parts of our storytellers' narratives were these latter qualities (resilience, altruism, etc.). As one of our storytellers said so eloquently, "[people who are] homeless are not a monolith. There is diversity and complexity within their experiences."

As newly minted physicians aspiring to serve marginalized patients, this work reminded us to never cease in striving to see people as more than the labels that society or the medical community places on them. The saying "never judge a person unless you've walked a mile in their shoes" never rang so true.

We have learned that friendships with those whom society has cast on the margins is critical to the work in building a more equitable society. Proximity is perhaps the best word to describe what we believe our society could use a lot more of and was at the core of this project. We were moved and changed by these storytellers — our new friends — and are still in awe at their willingness to share so much of themselves with us. To hear and sit with their immense human suffering changed us. The reciprocal exchange of listening was therapeutic, not only for the storytellers, but for us as well, and we are more compassionate people as a result.

Perhaps the greatest lesson has been a recognition that brokenness is what unites us as human beings and is the font through which compassion, mercy and kindness flow. We are all broken by a culture of materialism and busyness that values products and productivity over human health and wellbeing. Some of us are broken by our relationships, by racism and other systemic injustices, by poverty, by addiction or by our choices. Bryan Stevenson in his book *Just Mercy* writes, "We are bodies of broken bones. I guess I'd always

known but never fully considered that being broken is what makes us human. We all have our reasons. Sometimes we're fractured by the choices we make; sometimes we're shattered by things we would never have chosen. But our brokenness is also the source of our common humanity, the basis for our shared search for comfort, meaning, and healing. Our shared vulnerability and imperfection nurtures and sustains our capacity for compassion. We have a choice. We can embrace our humanness, which means embracing our broken natures and the compassion that remains our best hope for healing. Or we can deny our brokenness, forswear compassion, and, as a result, deny our own humanity."

Our hope is that these stories cause us to reflect more deeply on our brokenness as individuals and as a society, and that our reflections be turned into action. We must hold ourselves and our local and national governments accountable to caring for the most vulnerable and marginalized members of our society. We must listen to and involve people experiencing the injustices themselves in any efforts to address these issues. We must give space for ourselves and for others to change, leaving room for compassion, mercy and healing in the process. This work has irrevocably changed us in ways we are still discovering for ourselves, and we hope that these stories will change others' hearts and minds, too.

We would like to thank the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship and the University of Michigan Medical School for their financial support of this work. We also would like to thank Dan Kelly and the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, Dennis Archambault, Shelley Golsky, Molly Fessler and the editors at *Auxocardia*, Dr. Brent Williams, Lindsay Calka and the staff at Groundcover News, Wolverine Street Medicine, Mercy House, Mission A2 and each of the fearless storytellers who contributed to this work.

Gracie

THE STORYTELLING PROJECT

We met Gracie through our partnership with Mercy House (a House of Hospitality in the Catholic worker tradition on W. Huron Street in Ann Arbor) where she wears many hats, including house manager. She also leads Purple House, which is a warming center during the winter months for people unable to stay at the Delonis Shelter. Gracie is kind, generous, and the type of servant leader we aspire to be. She made us feel so welcomed in Mercy House. Whenever we met with her at Mercy House, lots of people would come in with differing needs. She accepted them and navigated each situation with true grace. She leads with love and keeps her "why" front and center. We were blown away by her story and how she became a leader in this space — in advocating for people who are unsheltered and in creating a place of welcomeness and belonging.

Please note, this story contains sensitive content, including sexual assault and physical/sexual abuse.

Early life

I grew up in Berkley, Mich., a northern suburb of Detroit in Oakland county. I grew up very poor in a white, hillbilly family, a pretty racist family. Before the age of 10, I had already witnessed someone die of an overdose — my stepfather. I was abused by my mom and our neighbor. I was physically abused and denied healthy boundaries. I witnessed my grandfather dying in front of me. Growing up, I just had this huge hole of needing acceptance, of needing a connection to a family.

There are people who have experienced so much abuse that they have no room for empathy or for compassion. They're very angry. They can be very destructive and abusive. That is one response to abuse, one end of the spectrum. But there is also the other end of the spectrum — you can see someone's pain and feel every bit of it. And I think some people, like myself, are given the ability to feel someone's pain. And a lot of that has to do with your environment, but I also think part of it is naturally who you are. During my time as a victim, my mom was super abusive to me when I was a baby and that could have caused me to become a super abusive person myself. However, as a kid, I had to take care of the people around me: I would clean up my dad after a drunken brawl or help take care of my grandmother — who was



Gracie (pictured middle) is the house manager at Mercy House and program manager of Weather Amnesty, an emergency winter shelter at Purple House. She is pictured above with Peggy Lynch and Karen Jacobson.

my best friend — who had a lot of health issues. I was making eggs for myself starting at 6 years old, for example. I had to be my own parent. Being a parent is just providing someone with needs, love.

In my first job when I was 14 years old, I worked at a restaurant and met this older Black woman who just made me feel like I was her kid. She looked after me. This one night she invited me to a barbecue at her house in Detroit. I had never been on a bus, and I had never been to Detroit, alone especially. She drew up this map — 'walk up to Woodward, jump on this bus, tell the bus driver you need to get off here; I live in the corner house.' And I did that. And I was probably the only White person at this large barbecue. But they just welcomed me — here's food, a hug, which was really accepting. And I think from that moment on I didn't see color in people. I just saw acceptance, love, and friendship, which made me an oddball in my family.

I became a parent when I was 18 or 19. It was not easy for me to have a relationship with my child. I was in my late teens and early 20s trying to be a parent in this insane judicial system that expected me to have short hair, not have any jewelry on, wear a buttoned up shirt, stand up straight, you know that kind of thing. I went through every measure I could to wear the hat that I needed, to play that role. When I look back on it, 'I wore so many different hats in one day.' I had a work hat, a parent hat, a hat for my lover, my friends, and my family. And they were all very different. After years of doing that, I realized that my brain can only handle so much of not being authentic to myself.

Compassion as my defense mechanism

Looking back, I felt different than everyone else. At school, I was bullied and I was made fun of because I was

different. The difference was that I was not the person matching the body. And then when I was a teenager, I realized I wanted to be a parent because I have this enormous amount of desire to provide a child all the things I didn't get. I feel like as a neglected child, there are different ends of the spectrum — you're either going to continue the neglect, continue being an abusive parent, or you have an enormous amount of desire to be different from what you were given. And that was me. I wanted to be a parent to 30 kids and make their lives so much better. I think of the humans that I come in contact with as all of that. I realize that 'a kid' is just an age. There is no limit on the need to be shown something different from what they're used to.

I have a genuine understanding of what it's like to be abused, to have lived through all the yuckiness in the world. I have experienced all the yuckiness any human can suffer, so I know what it feels like. When you think of the worst parts of humanity, I have experienced it. True empathy is having experienced that yuckiness yourself. For me, empathy is having no judgment. Seeing someone and not judging them at all for anything.

Experiencing homelessness and finding Mercy House

After having a couple of years of mental breakdowns, not being able to function, and having suicidal ideation every day, I knew something had to change. But even taking the step to go to the hospital was super huge. I met a social worker at the hospital who had been doing that kind of work for years, so I felt very confident that she knew what she was talking about. She told me a few things that I will never forget and that have stuck with me: 'It's okay to love people from a distance;' and that 'I was a survivor

see GRACIE page 9 ➔

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Left: On June 7, the Huron Valley Coalition of Starbucks Workers United gathered outside the Starbucks on State and Liberty Streets to watch the ballot count to certify their union election. Photo credit: Trenten Ingell. Right: Upon hearing the final ballot result, baristas entered their store to announce victory. Photo credit: Izzy Hedin-Urrutia.



Union Yes! Four out of five Ann Arbor Starbucks locations vote to unionize

DIDEM KOCHAN
Groundcover contributor

Starbucks has seen a wave of collective organizing in stores across the country. In December 2021, employees from five stores in Buffalo, New York voted to form unions and the first Starbucks Workers United in the country was founded by a landslide vote. Since then, more than 110 Starbucks stores have voted to certify their unions. Still, the demand for union membership shows no signs of slowing down and it continues with more than 300 stores in almost 35 states, including Michigan.

Alongside several stores across Michigan, three Starbucks locations in downtown Ann Arbor voted to form a union on June 7, after initially filing an intent to unionize on February 4.

Moreover, the stores located outside of downtown Ann Arbor led the charge for unionizing. The first two stores that petitioned in the district were at Glencoe Crossing and Jackson and Zeeb, both drive-thru locations outside of the University of Michigan campus. On April 6, Washtenaw County's Board of Commissioners unanimously announced a resolution in support of labor organizing movements in local branches of the national chain coffee shops.

In the elections, four out of five stores voted in favor of forming a union, while one store voted against. Here are the detailed results: The Glencoe Crossing location voted in favor of unionization by a tally of 14-0, Zeeb Road by a tally of 10-2, Main and Liberty by a tally of 10-3, and State and Liberty by a tally of 15-1. The

South University location voted against by a tally of 10-16.

The election results have shown that the Starbucks union movement in Ann Arbor is strong and increasing its momentum. Despite the resistance of Starbucks corporation against the unionization of partners by distributing anti-labor propaganda at stores across the country and firing the employees who lead the unionizing, all these endeavors and support indicate a remarkable change in the trajectory of labor activism.

Considering the accelerated growth in Starbucks' revenue during the past years, even during the pandemic (for example, Starbucks observed a 31% increase in revenue in the last fiscal quarter), Starbucks workers naturally expected some improvements in their working conditions and wages. In a corporate endeavor to emphasize team spirit and unity, Starbucks Coffee Company refers to their employees as "partners," while in reality, the demands and conditions of the job have felt disappointing — not empowering. Continuation of unfair treatment of partners, overwhelming loads of responsibilities and low wages triggered employees to manage their own safety protocols and profitability of stores. Although the main issues are staffing and unfair compensation, every store has its own personality, setup and customer profile, says Hannah, a former Starbucks shift supervisor who got laid off in April 2022 for organizing a union. For Hannah, what might be effective for a drive-thru store might not be for another local store, and having a union will give them a spot to pull up

a seat and voice their opinion to the people who can make a change. Hannah believes that a union will give the employees a chance to point out the issues specific to the store, since the baristas and shift supervisors are the ones who work and deal with the problems onsite every day, not the store managers and directors.

Without a union, she says, reaching out to a manager about the job or offering a solution to their problems is neither easy nor effective. She describes talking to a store manager as talking to a wall, since both show the same reaction. Given these unacceptable working conditions and neglectful attitude of the Starbucks corporation, it is no wonder the union movement in the local Ann Arbor district has been particularly successful.

Having her paycheck, health insurance and Starbucks' tuition assistance program payment, her work in Starbucks was a huge part of Hannah's life.

Since downtown Ann Arbor is a popular area packed with diverse people, Hannah says that they need better safety mandates that prioritize the overall safety of partners. As a shift supervisor, she had a set of responsibilities she had been trained for; however she sometimes felt that they were supposed to act as mental health professionals when there was a disturbance in the store caused by customers. "If we are going to be put in these situations, that is okay," she says, "but we need to be trained appropriately — and paid appropriately — because we do not know how to help and it eventually takes a toll

on us."

Speaking of being paid appropriately, Hannah also points out that Ann Arbor is a high-cost living area and their wages have never been comparable to the livable wage in Ann Arbor. Most of the employees, including her, cannot afford to live in the city where they work and people should not pretend that this is a normal case, according to Hannah.

She thinks that given these concerns of safety and wage, a union will be a solid platform to voice labor interests by giving them an opportunity to take part in making decisions about their own work. Hannah also wants to clarify one point which got lost in confusion during the unionization. "They think that all those employees hate their jobs, and that is not the case at all. We do not hate our jobs by any means, we are doing this because we love our jobs. We would not be fighting this hard and this long over a place we just want to quit. We just want the fundamental values Starbucks said they had when we were hired and trained."

With an increasing number of students attending University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College, coffee is getting more and more popular for dealing with daily hustle in Washtenaw. Coffee has staked its claim as the beverage of choice for other Ann Arbor residents as well, which automatically makes Starbucks an important part of the city. Although we cannot deny the need for coffee and the popularity of Starbucks, there

see **STARBUCKS** page 12 ➡

"Making space for ourselves is resistance:" celebrating local drag and burlesque performance art

IZZY HEDIN-URRUTIA
(they/them)
Groundcover contributor

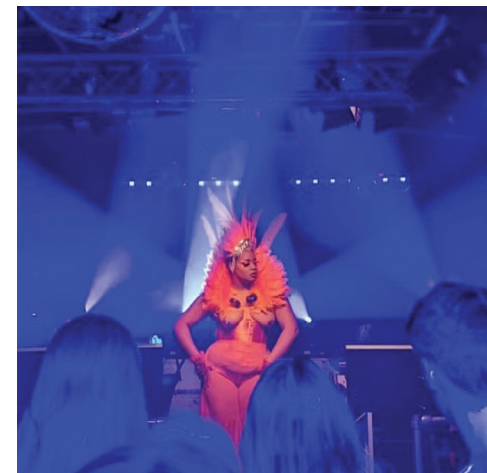
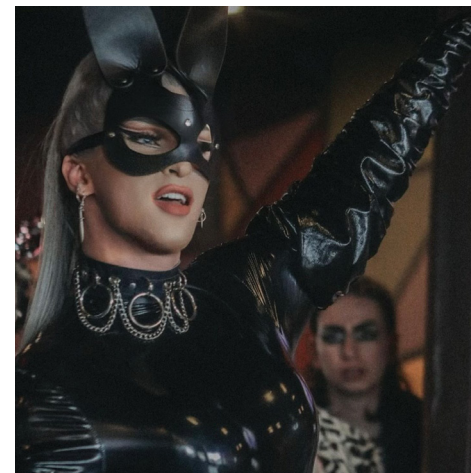
The Metro Detroit LGBTQ+ scene undeniably comes with a powerful and fiercely innovative stage. If you're queer in Ypsilanti, Ann Arbor, Detroit or Grand Rapids, chances are you've seen drag, burlesque and other forms of performance art that has left you with more than a sprinkling of fake blood or glitter. As a frequent participant (and sometimes, assistant) in more than one avante-garde, gender-blurring catwalk, I can personally attest to the distinctive range of style and drama of Southeast Michigan queer art.

This dramatic shift is one particularly meaningful for AUNTI, a local horror-glam drag queen and DJ, who started in the Ann Arbor scene in mid-2019 on the more grisly, high-impact end of deliciously alternative performance drag. She got her start through Ann Arbor LIVE's Candy Bar, now known as MI Pride Bar. AUNTI attests that from her very first show with Candy Bar, diversity in performance art inspires the back-and-forth influence and conversation that allows the local drag and performance community to continue growing.

"It wasn't just a drag show, it was a queer showcase," she states. "They had drag artists but also burlesque artists, and also a lot of trans performers, a lot of performers of color doing things that I had never seen before."

AUNTI is vocal about the special breaking edge, and sometimes eccentricity, that she feels often lacks in mainstream forms of drag such as RuPaul's Drag Race. When speaking on her introduction into the local scene of drag, AUNTI notes that she was inspired by the amount of performers "pushing the boundaries of gender" and the freedom she felt to invest herself in the more "macabre part of performance art" — freedom that has driven the more horror-centered forms of local drag evolving within the last few years.

Also involved in this drive to push the transformation of Southeast Michigan drag is Quing Fearless Amaretto, a burlesque performer, dancer, conjurer, poet and vocalist who specializes in and celebrates "innovative duality" in gender and performance. "The King that you need with a little sugar, the Queen that you crave with extra vigor," Fearless assesses regarding themselves and their art, which heavily focuses on queer eroticism, emotionality within movement, and gender fluidity within their stylistic expression and the way they interact with the audience from the stage. From their 2018 beginning in burlesque through various gigs in the local area, Fearless has made a



Left: AUNTI, Ann Arbor based horror-glam drag queen and DJ. Middle: Quing Fearless Amaretto, burlesque performer, dancer, conjurer, poet and vocalist. Right: Oshun Hathor, Afrosurrealist non-binary gogo draglesque and shake dancer. Photos submitted.

name for themselves through their use of empowerment as an art form. Fearless asserts that a community that "wants to uplift you" is a crucial element in welcoming new blood and new style into the scene. "It's an amazing feeling, when people enjoy your art and want to openly showcase your work."

Oshun Hathor, an Afrosurrealist, non-binary gogo draglesque and shake dancer who's been performing since they were eighteen, agrees with Fearless about the power of a supportive community for finding one's artistic niche: "Through people like Prince Marsallis I learned that we could express fear and anger through our art."

Oshun, whose fun and interactive performance work exudes high-drama campy glam on some days and evocative, riveting body horror on others, says that their desire for range and power can be attributed to encouraging performance from others in Michigan drag scenes. "So many of the performers like Tater Tot Noxious taught me the boundaries that a stage can be pushed to. These things continue to build who I am daily, and onstage."

But unique to the Metro Detroit performance circle is more than the profound communal energy and ingeniously transformative approach to live shows and art. As Quing Fearless Amaretto describes, every step and sway of sequined fabric tells a defiant story of queer bravery and anti-racist, anti-conformist queerness. "I feel like being queer is a state of being," Fearless states. "As queer people I feel like we are often told throughout our lives that we're 'too much.' Some of us rebel, some become louder, some shut down and stifle themselves ... but on that stage, we get to say what needs to be spoken."

Fearless asserts that their own personal experiences with marginalization not only find voice through performance, but through strength as well. "As a black trans-femme growing up and living

under the poverty line, burlesque has changed my life [...] I honestly didn't see myself as beautiful growing up. But since I started performing, I walk different. Eyes up, rather than looking at my feet. I dress more free." Fearless also describes the joy that comes with knowing that their own revolutionary experience influences other young Black queer people to find similar strength on the stage or in their daily lives. "I often get messages from people online telling me how inspiring it is to see a black queer person walking in their power. It's funny when you think about it, but taking off clothes made me a stronger version of myself."

Oshun Hathor agrees with Fearless about the revolutionary power of performance art for young queer people of color. "I think that the queer and especially Black performance of art has always showed society what is really happening around us. It lends us space to be seen and understood." They describe their pride in their local drag and performance community striving for inclusivity as much as possible, asserting that nothing is as progressively queer as celebrating all forms of art and the people who create it: "As a transplant to the community, I feel like some of the spaces are diligently working towards a more truly inclusive community."

AUNTI also speaks on how crucial it is that her art and horror in general is understood through the lens of being a queer person. "Being queer in the world is scary," she admits. "There's a real danger in general in not being a cis straight man [...] I feel like for a lot of people, especially queer people who are artists, it's like an escape into a world that's scarier than the one you're living in." AUNTI describes the way she's shaped her life and her art around this experience, maintaining her identity as a queer person living within counter-culture with pride. "As queer people, we're taboo in this straight,

heteronormative society, and macabre is also very taboo."

When looking to the future, sentiment for the next couple of months and even years is centered around improving the community for all forms of drag and art. For AUNTI, part of her hopes is that queer performance art continues to push even straight people out of their comfort zones. "I would hope that because Ann Arbor is such a sterile, gentrified, boring, straight town, that the drag scene just becomes more and more queer and more scary, creative, groundbreaking, and innovative," AUNTI states. "Because there are so many artists in the Ypsi area like the Pop Tart crew, and in Detroit that are doing things that other people aren't." Quing Fearless Amaretto also acquiesces to the sense that in order for Southeastern Michigan performance art to continue its momentum, it's important to resist the commodification and mainstream influence on queer performance spaces. "I have been seeing a shift of performance art venues turning into circuit parties, or some closing altogether, and it kinda makes me sad. I really hope we get more safe spaces for free expression of art to pop up over the next few years."

Oshun Hathor proclaims a hopefulness towards increasing representation for artists who create and participate in shows. "As I get older, seeing bodies that are like mine makes me feel so seen. Whether that's blackness, gender non-conformity, fat bodies or any other thing. Making space for ourselves is resistance, and that's what pride means to me."

You can find Quing Fearless Amaretto on Instagram, Facebook and all streaming platforms. Oshun Hathor also posts their sightings on Instagram and performs largely in Detroit, Ann Arbor and Lansing. AUNTI goes by her name on Instagram as well as Spotify, and spends her time performing in the Ferndale, Detroit, and Ann Arbor areas.

Lavender Program paints fresh coat on Purple House

LINDSAY CALKA

On June 1, Purple House reopened its doors as a community-driven, temporary shelter — this time specifically for folks of marginalized gender. I visited the house and sat down with Peatmoss Catesbaei (they/them), founder of the Lavender Program, to discuss the project and the needs in the community they aim to address.

LC: Let's start with telling Groundcover News readers what the Lavender Program is.

PC: Lavender Program is a short term emergency housing project for people of marginalized gender; so that includes cis women, trans women and other trans people as well as queer people. It's a small project, with a maximum of seven people in the house plus volunteers. The goal is to capture people that are generally underserved and people that are at a high risk of sexual violence. The intent is to get people who are bouncing around situations, these are also people that are at lower risk of committing physical violence against other people in the house. I want this to be a project that really helps people.

LC: Can you expand on how other shelters are not always effective for people of more vulnerable identities?

PC: Yeah, absolutely. So I got a call from a community service provider about a trans person who was looking for alternative shelter. The service provider misgendered the person in a conversation and then said, "You know, honestly, this sounds bad but I don't think we can keep this person safe," and I replied "Yeah [laughter] I think you're dead-on with that assessment." It's a real shame; it should be a priority because the world we live in is really transphobic. Without spaces for trans folks that meet their needs, they're at risk for violence from other people, and also staff often are not always gender affirming and not gender supportive. Being invalidated by people with power in that way absolutely is dangerous. So I hope to create a space where that happens less.

LC: What inspired you to initiate this project?

PC: I wanted to run a house for a long time, and had a lot of fears about it, but I was really lucky to be in a community of folks in Ann Arbor who have a lot of knowledge and experience and willingness. I looked around and there were a whole bunch of people that wanted to do this project with me. I feel like this is really the key; this is not a Peatmoss project, this is a project that a whole bunch of people have a lot of stake in

and lot to care about. I'm excited about that.

I was a full-time volunteer at the Daytime Warming Center two years ago, and this past year I was co-director at the DTWC. I learned so much. The DTWC is a magical place that does magical things. And this winter I was also a volunteer at Purple House, doing weather amnesty — I got to know the space, I got to know some of the people who care about the space and learned from people who've been doing it for a while. I learned from them, but also got curious and wanted to do things differently. So I'm excited to have a very small and manageable project in which we can experiment.

One experiment I'm really excited about is how to address people breaking rules — because people break rules. I'm gonna break rules. And not that I'm meaning to, but y'know some of the rules are like "show up to bi-weekly check-in meetings" and I'm sure that — I hope not to — but we all are human, we all have the capacity to harm each other and I'm sure that we will. I'm excited to figure out ways to address the harm that isn't necessarily punishment. So, I came up with an "amends menu." And my plan is to sit down with people who break rules and cause harm, and work together and pick out from the menu ways they can make amends, or I can make amends when I mess up.

LC: That's awesome. "Amend du jour."

PC: Yes! I hope to address problems in a more holistic way and move away from a punishment model. It is an abolitionist house. But it's a big experiment. We'll see. It could be a train wreck. We'll find out.

LC: Why group housing?

PC: Y'know, I think that group housing makes a lot of sense practically, and also, because I don't want to be the expert or people's only resource. I do know some things, and I do like to help — and I do want to help — but if there are seven people and they're all counting on one me to do something, then that's an inverted pyramid. It is not a stable structure. It is bad. And so, I'm really excited that everybody who is moving in so far has expressed willingness and interest in helping each other, and I think a lot of people who have been homeless for a long time know a lot of things and have a lot of wisdom that they can share with each other — and share with me. So I'm excited for that aspect of it, and I'm excited for group meals and meeting each other's needs; like basic needs like safety and food as well as more complicated needs for community and connectedness. I think that's a really important part of

building stability.

LC: What do you think the biggest obstacle will be? What do you think the house will need the most support in?

PC: So, I have a lot of fears. I'm afraid that we'll run out of money. This is not a paid position. People become homeless for complicated reasons with the complicated systems that really demand a lot of you to "get out." And, I'm worried that it won't be enough, that we'll give out tents at the end of three months and that will be it — which I think will happen sometimes. But I hope it's not the only thing we're doing.

I'm scared about interacting with other social safety nets or systems because they're so hostile and so unamiable, and so transphobic. So I'm worried about interacting with those, but hopefully we can work together. I invited Delonis case workers to come here, and if they follow through on that it would be great. So, I have hope that we can overcome those barriers but I think we're going to start having fundraisers here because I don't know — even just the moving-in, I'm like "oh dang, this is expensive."

I'm also worried about holding boundaries in the house; we have open hours on Tuesdays from 12 - 5 p.m., 4:30 we'll start cleaning up, but they end promptly at five. But y'know a lot of other people besides me are invested in the house so, invested in creating this container. So, I'm not the only one shutting the door at five.

LC: What are your biggest hopes and dreams for the Lavender Program?

PC: I think creating a safe container where folks who really need support, but have a lot of knowledge, can share that knowledge and get the support they need with other folks. I think this is a key ingredient in building a militant response to the city's absolute failure on addressing homeless people. And I think if we — and this is a wild dream



Peatmoss Catesbaei, founder of the Lavender Program, a short term emergency housing project for people of marginalized genders.

— if we get to know these people and build relationships and a lot of people feel safe coming over here, and these people have a lot of knowledge to share and share that knowledge about how the system continues to fail them, like what the barriers are, then I think that we can all come together and come up with systemic solutions. And I have a lot of willingness and interest in militantly fighting for those. And so let me put the city on notice that they can't keep failing these people like they currently are. And I think that the Lavender Program is going to be a key way of addressing those failures. With a deep knowledge of the way things could be better.

LC: And that reminds me... what is the origin of the name?

PC: Oh, it's just gay, I don't know. [laughter]. It's gay and sounds nice.

LC: What is the history?

PC: It's from the Lavender Menace. Back in the day feminists who hated lesbians called lesbians "the lavender problem." And so in the 80s a group

see **LAVENDER** page 11 ➡

GET INVOLVED

- Follow the Lavender Program on Instagram (@lavender_program) and Facebook (@lavenderprogram) to stay up to date on house needs and information. During the month of June there will be a house wish-list on these websites.
- The Lavender Program is in need of cooked meals. Volunteers are welcome to cook at the house.
- Monetary donations to the project can be directed to 501(c)3 nonprofit MISSION A2 at www.missiona2.org.
- If you identify as queer, trans, female, or of a marginalized gender and are experiencing homelessness call or text (734) 489-1233
- If you know someone with the identities above who is in need of housing connect them to Peatmoss at (734) 489-1233.
- Volunteers are welcome to come to open hours on Tuesday 12 - 5 p.m. to eat snacks, spend time with guests and learn more.

➡ **GRACIE** from page 5

and needed to be true to myself. I had never looked at myself as a survivor and a switch just clicked. It's all about perspective — I had survived life's tragedies. She changed my perspective.

I walked out of the hospital and gradually realized I had no one in my life to lean on. I had already cut off my communication with my family, for all the right reasons. My parents for sure. I felt that I needed to walk away from everyone and then reconnect with my uncle and grandmother. So, I just met this guy online and as this broken, vulnerable person, I fell for him because he was saying all the right things. I was living with him for almost a year and a half, and I didn't go anywhere. I was psychologically and physically abused, which was scary.

While I was staying with this guy in Highland Park, I went to the doctor because I thought I had a sinus infection. I was sitting in the room and the doctor (who doesn't usually have the best bedside manner) walked in, and as soon as he touched my cheek I jumped off the table because it hurt so bad. And then came the questions and the tears.

I am crying to the doctor, who showed me compassion in that moment, and made me get my jaw X-rayed, showing that I had a fracture. He helped connect me with people for help, and we would have conversations over the next few months about how to get out of my abusive situation. Every couple of weeks, if I had a few moments alone, I would call the [domestic violence] hotline. They'd just give me little pointers, like making sure I have a backpack. I was still completely scared to do anything.

On July 13, the same day as my grandma's birthday, my abuser broke a lot of things that I owned, punched me; it was a big, ugly thing that turned into the last time [this would happen to me]. Once he left, I laid down by the exit door. At 12:30 at night, I heard him knock on the window, this was part of the psychological control, where he would knock on the window so I would have 30 seconds of fear before he walked into the apartment. So I heard the knock, jumped up and grabbed my little bag, and I ran out the door. I ran and ran and ran, almost two miles.

I met a woman at this 24-hour diner. She asked me 'what's going on with you, honey?' with this Southern accent and

charm that was familiar and comforting to me. That was also the first time I said "Gracie" publicly out loud. And she told me to come see her tomorrow. I went in the next night after walking around all day. She offered for me to take a nap in her car while she worked, and handed me an envelope that had enough money to get me four nights in the motel across the street, that she and her co-workers had scrounged together.

That gave me hope. I did some gross things to maintain more motel space. I was daily calling the domestic violence shelter in the city of Wayne, and there were no beds available, no beds available. I struggled for two weeks at this motel. Then on Monday morning, I called the shelter and they had a bed open. So I took the city bus to Wayne, and that is when I went into the Domestic Violence shelter and spent 45 days there. I met this mom and two kids who wanted me to come live with her and nanny her kids while she worked. So I did that for a few months, before the guy she met didn't want me around there anymore.

Then I met this couple in Ypsi who let me crash on their couch for a minute. This turned into a bad, yucky, unhealthy

situation. I heard about Delonis, so I went there. I was super scared, nervous, and had a lot of anxiety. The couple of staff I met right away made me feel safe. A couple invited me to have lunch with them, and I did an intake and got a bed on the fourth floor within a week and a half, which was pretty quick. I think the shelter staff made me feel good and safe. Having the drive for a better life helped keep me going. I did what I had to do to stay in the shelter and take the steps to get things going for myself. I got inspired there.

I was bullied by several people while I was staying at Delonis to the point where they got kicked out of the shelter for their behaviors. I remember staying up at night crying to myself, thinking about all of the people who had been my bullies that were out in the freezing cold. I went crying to the director of Delonis to advocate that they lift the restrictions on these people. The director at the time made a point of letting my bullies know that they were being let back into the shelter because of me. I think that action changed them — they never treated me disrespectfully after that. I think they saw that I had acted out of compassion on their behalf and that changed how they acted towards me.

I was just at Delonis for a year. Most people do not stay 90 days. I think Delonis didn't want to get rid of me — I had developed a really good rapport with staff there.

Everyone at Delonis would go to Peggy's house (Mercy House) on Saturday mornings, so I started going, too. My initial thought when I met Peggy was what a beautiful person she is. The way the kitchen was set up was she would make the pancakes on the same side as [I would do dishes]. Her energy was very peaceful. I shared this very close space with her purposefully, to see her greet this house full of people and make them pancakes.

Gradually, over that time, my relationship with Peggy [grew]. There were a couple of moments when I felt that she respected and trusted me, like when she asked me whether I thought people were selling drugs out of her house or when she needed help with the Christmas party. So that's how I got involved with Mercy House and my current role as house manager.

Purple House and Weather Amnesty

MissionA2 (Michigan Itinerant Shelter System Interdependent Out of Necessity, a collection of community members providing food and communal space "for the community to come together to combat homelessness") had owned the Purple House for many years before it closed temporarily. Two years

see **GRACIE** page 10 ➡



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative solutions for a promising future

FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

As a Foster Grandparent, I see that not only the kids need us, the teachers need us as well. Some of the children need extra help that they can't give them. It delights me to see the glow in their little eyes when they learn something new. There are more children in need and not enough volunteers.

- GRANDMA PATRICIA FGP VOLUNTEER





Learn more by visiting bit.ly/washtenawfgp or contact Sandy Bowers at 734-544-3040 | bowerssk@washtenaw.org

SHELTER

Robert J Delonis Center
312 W Huron St.
734-662-2829

Housing Access for
Washtenaw County (HAWC)
734-961-1999
M-F: 8:30am-5pm

Safehouse
4100 Clark Rd.
24 hr crisis/help line: 734-995-5444
M-F: 9am-5pm




HOT MEALS

Robert J Delonis Center
312 W Huron St.
734-662-2829
Lunch: M-F 12-1pm, Sat & Sun 3-4pm
Dinner: M-F 5:30-6:30pm

St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
306 N Division St.
734-663-0518
Breakfast: 7:30-8:30am, 7 days a wk

MENTAL HEALTH

Community Mental Health
555 Towner St. (Ypsilanti)
M-F: 8:30am-5pm
CRISIS HOTLINE: 734-544-3050



COMMUNITY SERVICES

Friends in Deed
1196 Ecorse Rd. (Ypsilanti)
Help Line: 734-484-4357
Circles Line: 734-340-9042
Administrative Line: 734-485-7658
Helpline@FriendsinDeedMI.org

SOS Community Services
114 N River St. (Ypsilanti)
734-484-5411



LEGAL SUPPORT

Legal Services of
South Central Michigan
15 S. Washington St. (Ypsilanti)
734-665-6181
M-F: 9am-5pm

Washtenaw County Prosecutor's
Conviction Integrity & Expungement
Unit (CIEU)
888-783-8190
M-Th: 9am-5pm, F: 9am-1pm
CIEU@washtenaw.org
expungement@mwse.org



EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Michigan Works
304 Harriet St. (Ypsilanti)
Mon, Wed, Fri: 8am-5pm
Tues: 8am-7pm
734-714-9814



SHOWERS/LAUNDRY

Mercy House
805 W Huron St.
734-678-9818
Sat breakfast 10am-2pm


Peace House Ypsi
706 Davis (Ypsilanti)
734-754-0648
Sun brunch 10am-1pm

Journey of Faith New Beginnings
Homeless Ministry
1900 Manchester Rd.
734-945-7825
M-W by appointment
Fri food distribution




DRUG/ALCOHOL TREATMENT

Spera Detox
502 W Huron St.
734-669-8265



COVID FUND ACCESS

Home of New Vision’s
Engagement Center
103 Arnet St. (Ypsilanti)
Open 24 hrs, 18+ years only
734-879-1101



Sudoku ★★★★★☆ 4puz.com

9		1	8	2				
		2		4	6			5
4		3			9			
3	2	8						
							9	1
								8
			9			3		6
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				7	5	2		9

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

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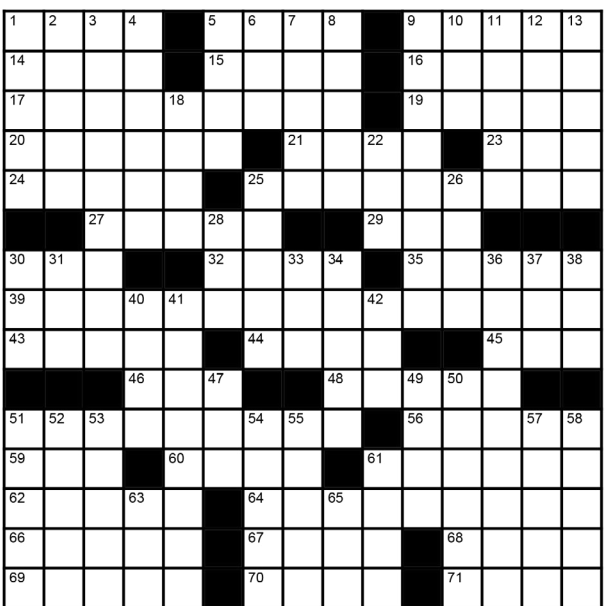
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- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
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- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

Bee Minuses
by Victor Fleming and Tracy Bennett

- ACROSS
- Box-top parts
 - Clock-set choice
 - Former Wolverine Tom Brady has won five
 - Jump practiced at Yost Ice Arena
 - Soda alternative
 - Authorize
 - First word in the name of a legendary "Star Wars" space freighter
 - Wall Street transaction
 - Sting's former band, with "The"
 - Randall and Beth's middle daughter on "This is Us"
 - Alternative to "Eddie" or "Ward"
 - Gal pal in Guadalupe
 - Easily seen
 - "Cuchi-cuchi" entertainer
 - "Feed me," in dogspeak
 - Mysterious sighting in the night sky, for short
 - Lyft competitor
 - Grand instrument at Michigan Theater and Hill Auditorium
 - What 17-, 25-, 51- and 64-Across are
 - "It's been real!"
 - Hairy twin of the Old Testament
 - Computing pioneer Lovelace
 - "All Things Considered" broadcaster
 - First time out
 - What committees must reach
 - Jungian principle
 - Amaze
 - Come down
 - Protective covering for neck or shoe
 - "28 Days" setting
 - Tiny
 - Acid in proteins, informally
 - Redding who sang on the dock of a bay
 - Feminine first name from Genesis
 - Liable to bite someone's head off
 - ___ to nothing
 - Large Bugs Bunny features



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- DOWN
- Bay city
 - "Power corrupts," e.g.
 - Like one who's always starting arguments
 - "Jingle Bells" conveyance
 - Clearasil target
 - Astonished query in response to "Jaccuse!"
 - "Demoted" object in the solar system
 - "American Buffalo" playwright
 - David
 - Admits a mistake
 - 35mm camera design
 - Alternative course of action
 - Highlight of "The Lonely Goatherd" song in "The Sound of Music"
 - Alfred Nobel, for one
 - "Elite Eight" org.
 - "Breathe Me" singer
 - Word before gas or cause
 - Hairstyle with full, parted, tapered, pulled back and twisted out variations
 - Have regrets about
 - Sounds of hesitation
 - Old-fashioned "Nonsense!"
 - Chi-town trains
 - Enjoys some Joyce Carol Oates, perhaps
 - Appreciation
 - Calculate column totals
 - Cryptologic grp.
 - Match up
 - Route deliverer of old
 - Deserving of success
 - Biology class initials
 - Bighorn bleats
 - Org. awarded the 1965 Peace Prize
 - 200 milligrams
 - "You ___ big time!"
 - "M*A*S*H" sodas
 - ___ Says (playground game)
 - Pull together
 - Bench-clearing brawl
 - "There ___ enough hours in the day"
 - Basic point
 - "A Bug's Life" character
 - "No dice!"

GRACIE from page 9

ago in October 2020, I remember seeing this woman Tamara, who had severe schizophrenia and could not stay at Delonis, day in and day out in the cold and wet. I just felt that this was so unfair. As a board member of Mission A2, I had the idea to start a weather amnesty program at Purple House to provide shelter for people who are unable to stay at Delonis due to trauma, severe mental illness or addiction, etc. We would be picking up the slack in the system.

I had this idea, but I needed the help of two friends, Ben and Lindsay. They helped to make it happen. The three of us would alternate shifts, and we would be up all night from 6 p.m. - 8 a.m. We would then go home and sleep a little bit then do it all again for many months [until the weather got better].

Thoughts on the healthcare system

A lot of work needs to be done in the mental health area. Why is this schizophrenic woman wandering around the streets for two years? The system is off

somewhere in that regard. There’s a crack in the road and these folks fall into that crack and cannot advocate for themselves. For example, there are quite a few people that are in this crack, and I have been on the end where I have called crisis teams in certain situations. [The crisis teams] are completely useless because they cannot do anything unless someone is presenting as a danger to themselves or others. But if someone is completely delusional — that’s dangerous. How is that not dangerous? People suffer as a result of that. A person who is completely delusional shows up to us in a police car every single night. How is that safe for anybody?

In terms of substance use treatment, it’s another vicious cycle, a revolving door. It’s another area where Purple House could be really helpful. There is a hole in the system, as there’s a huge percentage of the homeless community with mental health issues, addiction or a combination of both.

For example, say somebody is homeless and is ready for [addiction] treatment. They come to their case manager and say ‘I am ready. Get me a bed. I am ready to do it.’ The case manager says,

‘Okay, we’ll call and make arrangements and get you a bed.’ Well, turns out there will be a bed available at X treatment center in two weeks. What are they supposed to do for two weeks? Go live on the streets, chase the drugs? You’re gonna lose them. They’re not gonna come back. They’re gonna change their mind. Their heart will be in a different place. They may end up in jail. They may end up dead. The list is endless. And that is what I would like to see — a safe space for these people to go while they are waiting to get into treatment. That is something I would like to see Purple House do, but that would require a lot.

Welcomeness and being true to self

When I enter a space, I try to own it. That helps to make people feel more comfortable who are more vulnerable. And it can go the other way, too. People can walk in and feel completely uncomfortable with who I am as a trans woman. But once they realize I am owning the space, I am the one providing the space for their shelter, it helps them to look beyond their own

uncomfortable ignorance. I am not sure where else in this particular state this can happen. I am not sure how many places in Detroit you can go and have a couple of trans people run a shelter. If that happened for me, that would have changed a lot of my fear. Ann Arbor is a progressive city to be if you are trans or part of the LGBTQ community. I have always felt pretty comfortable walking around in Ann Arbor.

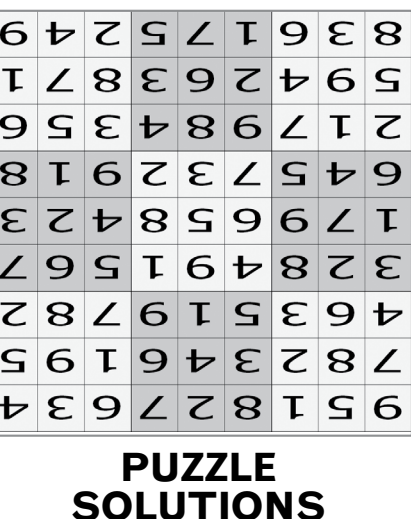
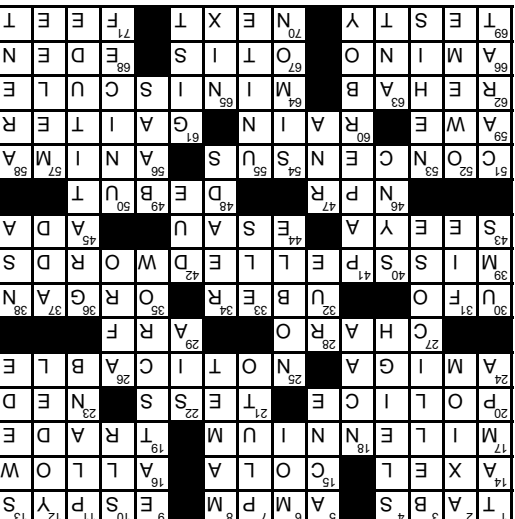
During the last five years on my journey, although I am not Christian, I have always tried to seek out spiritual connections. In realizing that I have a spiritual connection to the universe and that things happen for a reason, I have developed a strong sense of gratitude. I pulled myself out of the gutter, so anything that I have, I am grateful for. I tell myself that every single day. The universe has a plan, and my relationship with Peggy and the community is something I can’t necessarily put into words. It has allowed me to become this person that people respect, admire and need. I am reminded that I am more than what I seem at face value. I will never forget that we are more than people see.

LAVENDER from page 8

formed called the Lavender Menace. During a National Organization of Women’s Conference, this group said enough was enough. They turned off all the lights, cut the sound and replaced their normal shirts with t-shirts that had Lavendar Menance silkscreened on them. They had an alternate convention planned on how to address heteronormatively in terms of feminism

and push the feminist agenda forward to center lesbians. And everybody just accepted that — I mean, like the people in charge were mad about it — but the rank-and-file members were like “actually, we like lesbians.”

I think it’s important to queer this space, I really appreciate the MISSION A2 board trusting me to do that.



PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

One bowl chocolate cake

CHRIS FIELDS

Groundcover contributor

This one bowl chocolate cake is not only easy to make, but also vegan and nut-free! It is a perfect base for a variety of frostings, glazes and toppings — truly delicious for any occasion. You'll be sure to impress those who are lucky enough to take a slice.

Ingredients:

1 and 1/4 cup flour
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup warm water
1/3 cup neutral oil
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon white or apple cider vinegar



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Sift dry ingredients in a bowl and mix to combine. Add liquid ingredients and mix, careful to not over stir.

Pour into greased 9 x 13 in pan or two 8 in rounds. Bake for 30 min or until inserted toothpick comes out cleanly. Cool completely before taking out of the pan.

➔ STARBUCKS page 6

are a couple of ways that the Ann Arbor community can take a stand to support the Starbucks employees.

Hannah encourages the community to explore other coffee shops which are not run by multi-billion dollar companies with stores worldwide, until Starbucks recognizes the union and takes workers' interests seriously. Considering the abundance of local coffee shops in downtown Ann Arbor, taking steps to any other direction from a Starbucks corner will result in finding a different caffeine resource — also a place where people can study peacefully or spend some quality time with their friends.

Hannah also suggests, "Come in, tell your barista you support them, you believe in what they are doing, and you are there for them. It will make them feel that they are not alone in this."

We have witnessed a rapidly developing and striking labor movement in Ann Arbor, and now Ann Arbor has become a union town with its four newly-unionized Starbucks stores. It is undeniable that there are still many steps to take on this long road to justice and equality, but combining the victory of elections and invaluable support from community members, the future looks promising for everyone.

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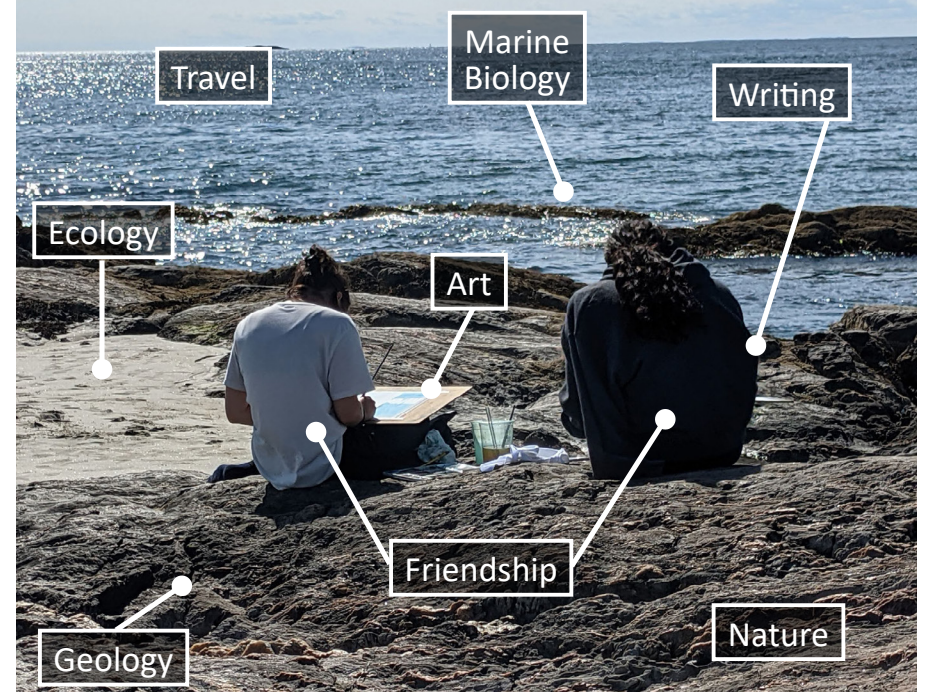
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